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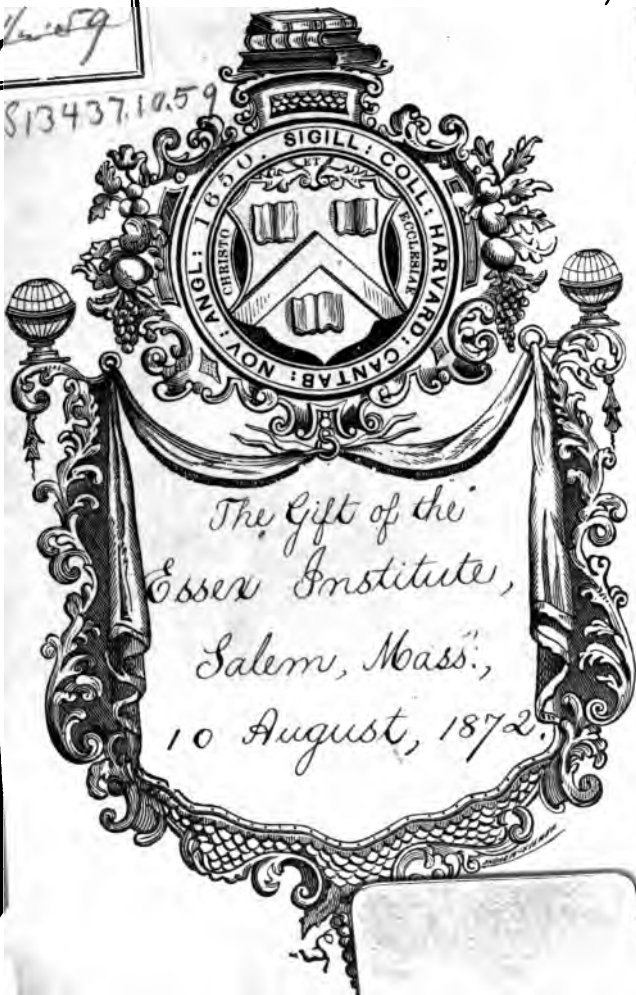
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PRICE TEN CENTS.

First Church
IN
SALEM, MASS.,

1634.

SALEM:
PUBLISHED BY THE ESSEX INSTITUTE.

1871.

Publications of the Essex Institute.

JOURNAL OF THE ESSEX COUNTY NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY. 1 vol. 8vo. 1836-1852. pp. 135.

In paper, ... \$

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PROCEEDINGS AND COMMUNICATIONS. 8vo. 6 vols.

1848-1868. [The Proceedings close with the sixth volume.] The series, in numbers, . . . 1

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The *Bulletin* takes the place of the *Proceedings of the Institute*, which close at the date of the commencement of the *Bulletin*. This publication will contain all short communications of general interest, both of Historical and Scientific character, made at the meetings of the Institute, and the record of the meetings and business of the Institute. Occasional lists of the deficiencies in the library of the Institute, and of the duplicates offered for sale or exchange will also be given.

[Continued on 3rd page of C]

First Church

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PUBLISHED BY THE ESSEX INSTITUTE.

1871.

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1872, Aug. 10.
gift of
the Essex Instit

INTRODUCTION.



THE increasing interest in the frame of the First Building erected for the First Church in Salem in 1634, now the property of the Essex Institute, and placed in the rear of the Society's rooms, Plummer Hall, Salem, authorize the printing, in a separate form from the publications of the Institute, of the Reports of a Committee appointed in 1859 to investigate the authenticity of the traditions in relation thereto.

This building was first placed upon the site of the present First Church, on the south-eastern corner of Essex and Washington streets, a spot consecrated to this sacred use from the earliest period. On the erection of the second edifice it was removed, and during the past century or century and a half, had

been located for many years on the Proctors' estate, rear of Boston street, where it was used first as a dwelling or an inn, and afterwards as a barn or a place for the storage of tools and rubbish. Through the liberality, and under the direct supervision, of the late Col. Francis Peabody* of Salem, when the building was taken down in 1864, the frame was carefully preserved, restored to its original mortices and placed within a good external covering. It is accessible to visitors on application to the Assistant Librarian of the Institute.

In 1865, Tablets were placed on the western face of the building, now standing on the original site, by the energy and enterprise of the late George A. Ward, Esq., who was an enthusiast in all that relates to the early history of Salem. These tablets contain the following inscriptions :

“On the 20th of July, 1629, a day set apart by order of

JOHN ENDICOTT,

then Governor of Massachusetts Bay, the first settlers

* Mr. Peabody, at the time of his decease, October 31, 1867, and for several years previous, was President of the Institute.

met for the purpose of establishing a Church, which was fully organized the 6th of August;

SAMUEL SKELTON
was elected Pastor, and
FRANCIS HIGGINSON,
Teacher.

Their immediate successors were Roger Williams, 1631, and Hugh Peters, in 1636.

“The frame of the First “Meeting House,” in which the civil affairs of the colony were also transacted is preserved, and now stands in the rear of Plummer Hall. It was enlarged in 1639. The second Meeting House was built in 1670, the third in 1718, the fourth in 1826,—all on this spot.”

“The Provincial House of Assembly, convened in the Court House, which stood on the contiguous lot now included in Washington street, Resolved on the 17th of June, 1774, that a congress of the ‘several colonies on this continent is highly expedient and necessary,’ and elected delegates to said congress. Governor Gage forthwith dissolved the House. An election of a new House of Assembly was ordered by the Governor, to convene in the Salem Court House. The members of that body, on the 7th of October, 1774, transformed themselves into a Provincial Congress which assumed sovereignty; thus terminating all political connection between Massachusetts and Great Britain.”

Over the window is a tablet, bearing the inscription, in raised letters :

“FIRST CHURCH.”

Within the old Meeting House are now deposited specimens of furniture and other relics of the olden times. The following may be specified :

1. A Sofa brought from Normandy by some of the French Huguenots,—who came to this country soon after the revocation of the edict of Nantes by Louis XIV, in 1685, which occasioned the emigration of a great number of artists and other useful men to other lands, carrying with them their industry and their riches ;—and for many years in the possession of the family of John Appleton of Salem, and by one of the members presented to the Essex Historical Society soon after its formation.

2. The Communion Table of the East Church, Salem, during the occupancy of the first house built on the corner of Essex and Hardy streets in 1718 ; taken down in 1846 ; presented by the Parish Committee.

3. A small Stand which belonged to Deacon Benja. Gerrish, who, in 1682, removed from Newbury to Salem, where he acted as Deacon in Parson Noyes' church which stood upon the ground where was afterwards built the old First Church (Dr. Prince's). It served as a stand for the christening basin in the church some one hundred and eighty years ago.

4. The Desk which Nath'l Bowditch, LL.D., used when engaged in the translation of La Place's *Mecanique Celeste*. Presented by his son, Dr. Henry I. Bowditch.

5. A Pew Door from the Meeting House of the First Parish in Hingham; built in 1680; repaired in 1869. The pews were made in 1755; presented by Hon. Solomon Lincoln of Hingham, Oct. 15, 1869. The Pew was owned by William Lincoln (the grandfather of the donor) and his brother, Enoch Lincoln (grandfather of Gov. Levi Lincoln, of Worcester).

6. A Samp Mortar from the Treadwell farm in Topsfield.

7. A Spinnet made by Samuel Blyth of Salem. Presented by Jesse Smith.

8. A Piano made by John Broadwood of London, in 1791.

In the gallery is a collection of spinning and flax wheels, used in the olden times; and on the walls are many engravings of the ministers and others who flourished in the last century and the early part of the present. Also views and other relics.

We close these introductory remarks with the following quotation from an illustrated article on "Salem," in *Harper's Weekly* Supplement, August 5, 1871.

"Nowhere in this land may one find so ancient and worshipful a shrine. Within these walls, silent with the remembered presence of Endicott, Skelton, Higginson, Roger Williams, and their grave compeers, the very day seems haunted, and the sunshine falls but soberly in. The visitor seems to close the door upon the bustle and complacency of his own time, and by some subtle spell of sympathy to find himself standing at last in mute and intelligible relations to the firm, integral life to which he owes so much. Quaint and in keeping as are the visions

that the suggestiveness of the place conjure from out the resources of his memory, there is yet in them all no longer so bald a sense of Puritanic affectation or constraint; the bare timbers of these narrow precincts evince a necessity that was in itself denial; and he remembers vividly, as if for the first complete time, that the souls that met God here were sadly weary of a colder intercession."

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REPORT

OF THE COMMITTEE, ON THE AUTHENTICITY OF
THE TRADITION OF THE FIRST CHURCH,
BUILT IN 1634.

READ AT A MEETING OF THE INSTITUTE, APRIL 26, 1860.

THE Committee appointed in July 1859, to ascertain the authenticity of the tradition as to the identity of an old building on the estate of David Nichols, back of Boston street, — having been built from the frame of the first Church ever erected in Salem, and report at a future meeting of the Institute what action it would be advisable for the Institute to take in relation thereto, have attended to that duty, and beg leave to report, that

Your Committee have with unwearied pains endeavored to investigate the subject, for which they were appointed ; that they trust they have brought to this important task, the most unpre-

judiced and impartial minds,—that they flatter themselves that they have been only diligent searchers into the truth, in relation to this subject; that they have no private views or aims to gratify—that they have only in common with their fellow citizens, the sincere and ardent desire to investigate, impartially, the validity of the testimony on which has rested the belief that this is the veritable building, which the records say was erected in 1634, for the first Church; where our ancestors worshipped the God of their fathers, agreeably to the dictates of their own consciences; and if true, to preserve for all coming time, this humble temple of God, from the all-destroying elements; the tooth of time, having already made very free with it.

But while we desire to sift the evidence critically and impartially, on which this tradition is founded, we have wished to do it, in a liberal and catholic spirit, with no narrow or cynical criticism, and to exercise towards the traditional part of the evidence, the liberality which we

think honestly and truthfully belongs to it. That it has come to us from long lived men, remarkable for retentive memories, and famed for truthfulness; that it is no vague, improbable legend, based upon uncertain and visionary testimony.

The first question appears to be — is this the frame of the first Church erected in 1634? Is there, in records and reliable tradition, evidence to warrant a belief that it is?

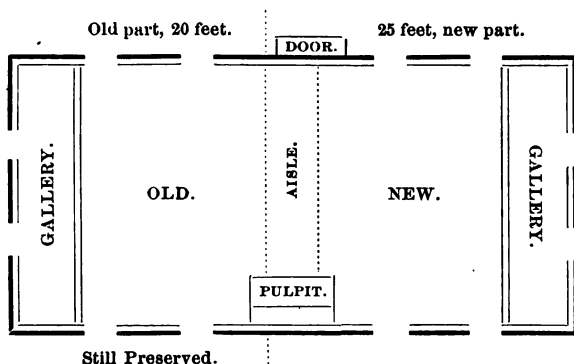
Let us first look into the evidence from the records, then into the tradition, — and lastly, — the internal proofs from the building itself.

We have the assurance from the records, that the congregation having worshipped from 1629 to 1634 in an *unfinished* building, of one story, agreed, the latter year, with Mr. Norton, to build a suitable meeting-house, which should not exceed the amount of £100. In 1638, four years afterwards, "bills were paid for daubing and glazing this house." The next year, in February 1639, an agreement was made with John Pickering to build a "Meeting-house," but from

what follows, and in which your Committee coincide, it was only an *addition* to the old house; for the town voted on the 31st Dec. 1638, only two months previous, to build an *addition* to the meeting-house. The agreement with Pickering was "that it be twenty-five feet long, the breadth of the old building, with a gallery answerable to the former, one catted chimney of twelve feet long, the back whereof to be brick or stone, to have six sufficient windows, two on each side, and two at the end, and a pair of stairs to ascend the galleries, suitable to the former." Here, only *one* end is mentioned, and a *Meeting House* would of course have had *two* ends. Thus we have the information, also, that the first building had a gallery.

This *addition* made the building twice its former size, exclusive of the five feet which was necessarily reserved for a pulpit, on the side, between the galleries and a door opposite with an aisle in the middle, a style of Church building which continued from that day until a very

late period. The whole length of the building then was forty-five feet as here represented in the following plan.



In 1647 "Mr. George Curwin and William Lord have undertaken to provide stone and clay for repairs of the meeting house. Mr. Curwin has promised to provide for covering the meeting house, five hundred nails, and is promised to be paid to his content." This house continued, as appears by the records, to accommodate the "congregation" until 1670, when the sec-

ond house was built, of sixty feet long, fifty feet wide and twenty feet stud, situated according to the records "at the west end of the old meeting house towards the prison." The town gave the land to set it upon. On the 17th Aug., 1672, the town "voted, that the old meeting house be reserved for the town's use, to build a skoolehouse and watch house," and be carried "into some convenient place where it may be reformed for the town's use," and it was further voted that "the old pulpit and the deacon's seat be given to the farmers," who were then erecting a meeting house at the Village. The stones of the underpinning of the old meeting house and the clay is given to Mr. Fisk. The "clay of the old meeting house" has probably reference to the floors, which were no doubt made of clay, — boards being scarce, as there were but few saw-mills in the Colony at that early period; this custom of clay floors is still common in the cottages of Scotland and Ireland at the present day. On the 10th June, 1712, it was proposed to fit up the old watch

house, which was built, as we have seen, from part of the old meeting house, as a place "for teaching reading, writing, ciphering and navigation." Now the whole house is converted into a school house or into two school houses, being formerly fitted up for a school house and a watch house." This school house continued in the town's use to May 19, 1760, a space of forty-eight years, when the records inform us a "*new schoolhouse*" is to be built *not* on the same spot as the *old one* in School Lane. "School Lane" is said in the town records, to have been *afterward* Court street, and which is *now* Washington street. This *old* school house was situated, says tradition, to the northward of the old Hunt house.

With this entry about the location of the *new school house* ends the town records, which are all missing from May, 1760, to May 1764, and no doubt the missing part contained the record of the disposal of the old school house. Had this record been preserved, any tradition would have been unnecessary and superfluous. As it

is, however, all that is known from 1760, of the old house, is from this source : and there is every reason to believe it was then disposed of, and that Thorndike Proctor, who was at this time a conspicuous man in town affairs, Selectman and Moderator of Town Meetings, and Grand Jury man, bought the oldest part and re-erected it on his own land, back of what is now Boston street, where it was used as a tavern or a refreshment house. Here it has slumbered undisturbed for a period of one hundred years. The tradition is to this effect, obtained through Caleb Peirce, Esq., and comes down to us from the Pope family and from Benja. Proctor and his sister, who are the lineal descendants of the said Thorndike Proctor. Mr. Peirce says :

“Joseph Pope, the first of the name who came to New England, was in Salem in 1636 ; his name appears on the Salem records about that time.”

“Joseph Pope 2d was born in——, married in 1679 Bethusa Folger, aunt to Dr. Franklin.”

"Enos Pope, son of Joseph 2d, was born in 1690; he lived near the Fowler house in Boston street. In 1718 he built the house now occupied by Mr. Wilkins at the foot of Gallows Hill, which was within a few rods of this old building in which Enos 2d was born in 1721, and who died at the age of 92. Enos 3d was born in 1769. My recollections of my grandfather, Enos 2d, are very clear and distinct. Until a few months of his death he was very active, clear minded and communicative. He was frequently enquired of by people with regard to previous events, and he was so exact in his account of dates and particulars that it was supposed he had kept a journal for many years, which was not the case.

"I remember his pointing out the course of the old road, which passed the tavern house and joined the present street directly opposite his house. With Enos Pope 3d, I lived near forty years,—he was full of information and anecdotes, and yet very cautious and careful in his statements. It is from him and his sisters, who

lived in the family long after their father's death, that I got the account. It was never doubted by them. It should be remembered that the persons I have named were separated only by death, although very long lived; father, son and grandson have lived together in the same house, and the connection that bound the past to the present was never broken for a day. Two persons are now living who were born in the old tavern, viz., Benja. Proctor, aged 84 and his sister. I have just seen them, and find that they well remember that it was always known as having been made from the "First Meeting House." Mr. Proctor says he has heard his father say *so more than a hundred times*. A few years ago, I mentioned to an older brother of theirs, since dead, what I had heard of its early history, and found him much better informed than I was, and much interested in having the house preserved. It was from him I first learned that the house itself affords so much evidence of its origin."

Thus ends the tradition. The internal evi-

dence that the present building is the identical first Church erected in 1634 are, first, the size of the building, which so completely matches the "*addition*" made in 1639, being twenty feet long and seventeen wide; secondly, its peculiar construction, — one important point being that a beam, apparently intended for the support of a gallery, is framed in from side to side at about one-third the length of the building; that upon the timber opposite to this beam are peculiar tenons, which, in the opinion of a master builder, cannot be for any other use than the insertion of knees for some support, which your committee believe was for a gallery.

The daubings upon the walls, or plastering as we should now say, composed of clay and chopped straw, also prove the great antiquity of the building, but your committee not being in possession of the fact *how* the building was removed to the present location are not clear, that this work might not have been added subsequently to its removal. The great pitch of the roof, unusual at that day for dwellings, may

have been so designed to give a wider and freer space in the galleries.

Upon a careful review of all the testimony, your Committee are unanimously of the opinion, that the evidence, thus educed, from the public records, from reliable tradition and from the internal testimony of the building itself, is plain and conclusive. Other great and valuable mementoes of our fathers have rested upon much less evidence, particularly the far-famed, and world-renowned Plymouth Rock. Our records prove that the old meeting-house of 1634 was in existence, in the town's use and occupation down to 1760. The tradition since that period is plain, straightforward and undeniable, covering a space only of two lives, and those of the most veritable character, particularly that of Enos Pope 2d, born in 1721, who died in 1813, and who was forty years of age when it was removed from its place in School Lane to where it now stands.

The internal evidence derived from the building itself is alike confirmatory of both records

and tradition, and your Committee have no hesitation in saying, that in this humble building has been as it were providentially preserved the first Church erected by our fathers in 1634. The same building in which Roger Williams, Hugh Peters, John Higginson and other divines of that day, expounded the scriptures and dispensed the bread of life to their hearers, and it is unnecessary to say, that it is a most valuable memento of our ancestors ; identified, as it is, with their pure and simple devotion and pious zeal.

Your Committee would, therefore, in furtherance of the duty which devolves upon them, recommend that this "*Santissima Casa*" — this most holy house, be removed to some suitable place and fitted up internally and externally as nearly as possible to its original appearance, where it would be more accessible to the public, and where pilgrimage could be made to it by every son and daughter of Massachusetts who values our peculiar history and the preservation of memorials connecting us with

our fathers, and as they shall stand beneath its restored and sacred roof, the words once uttered to Moses shall steal upon the mental ear, "*Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest, is holy ground.*"

Respectfully submitted,

C. M. ENDICOTT, Chairman,
FRANCIS PEABODY,
GEO. D. PHIPPEN,
A. C. GOODELL,
IRA J. PATCH.

April 26, 1860.

THE COMMITTEE

TO WHOM WAS INTRUSTED THE CARRYING OUT
OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS CONTAINED IN
THEIR REPORT, MADE TO THE INSTITUTE,
APRIL 26TH, 1860: REPORT,

THAT they have attended to the duties assigned to them, and now present their work completed.

The principal difficulty the Committee had to contend with, was to find a suitable site on which to place the Church of the Pilgrims. This was finally arranged through the efforts of our late most worthy associate, GEORGE A. WARD, Esq., who was added to the Committee, Dec. 18th, 1863.

The assent of the Proprietors of the Athænum having been obtained to the placing of the Church on the land in the rear of the Plum-

mer Hall, the Committee decided to transfer it to this site, if, upon examination, it should be found in a suitable condition for removal.

The contract for building this Church was made in November, 1634, with a Mr. Morton ; the trees were felled in the winter of 1635, and the building erected during the summer of that year. Its glazed windows were not added until 1637 ; they were probably ordered in 1636 from England, and were paid for according to the Town Records in 1638.

Your Committee were satisfied after a thorough examination that the Frame was the only part of the building that afforded unmistakable evidence of having belonged to the original construction. They removed with care the outer covering of the building, the boards and the shingles ; they marked and numbered every part of the frame ; they noted the positions of the posts, braces, plates, rafters, ridge-pole, gallery-beam, tie-beam, mortices and cock-tenants : these were carefully examined and questioned as to their story of the past : the re-

sponses were prompt, and so satisfactory to those who could understand their language, that their origin and mission were placed beyond doubt.

It was resolved to transfer these relics to their new site, and after dressing the wounds inflicted by Time, to erect them into their original positions and form, that they might repeat to coming generations the same story they had whispered to your representatives.

We have raised an external structure of suitable strength, to which the ancient frame is bolted, and this frame is seen projecting on the outside of the plastering within the building. We have supported the external structure by means of sills resting on stone posts, raised from the ground to protect the floor from decay. The floor of the original building, judging from the Town Records, was made of clay.

The wooden posts so far as they remain to us, have been extended to meet the sills by the addition of timber; these extensions have been colored brown, to distinguish them from the

original parts. The posts then rise, and terminating in cock-tenants enter the plates, supporting them firmly in their positions. The cock-tenant is a form of tenon, universally used at that early period, in the wooden structures of England. This fact is an evidence of the period and purpose of the Frame.

We have farther strengthened the plates by adding strips of plank, which assist them to bear the superincumbent weight of the roof. These additions like the supporters of the posts are colored brown, to distinguish them from the original materials.

Between the posts are placed the original braces, which are wonderfully preserved. Lodging on the plates are the six original rafters, which bear on high the original ridge-pole, so aged and infirm that it requires the aid of the plaster in which it is imbedded to support it.

The rafters are secured to the plates with iron bolts, two of which are seen. These triangular frames united by eight purlins, formed the original roof of the Church; their great

height above the plate indicates their purpose ; they are in keeping with the early English Church roof.

The frame of the Gallery furnishes very satisfactory evidence of its original use as the gallery of the Church, though upon the first examination this was not apparent. In the building as we found it, the great beam which now holds up the gallery front, was raised above its present position, so that the tenons entered the two upper mortices (these mortices now remain open, and are seen to be above the present position of the timber). This position of the principal beam of the structure on the first inspection conflicted with the claims of the tradition that this was the original First Church ; but on farther scrutiny of the posts that hold up the ends of the gallery front, there was found an opening or slott in the post, at some distance beneath the beam ; this had been filled with bricks and clay, and farther concealed by a covering of whitewash ; by a few strokes of the hammer this filling came out, and disclosed a

regularly shaped mortice, of a size to hold the tenon of the beam. The opposite post was found to have a similar mortice, at the same distance under the beam: this discovery made it certain that these were the original mortices in which the gallery beam rested. It appears that by a vote of the town in 1672, the First Church was converted into a school house, and this gallery beam was then raised to new mortices made in the posts higher up, to establish a ceiling for the school-room. Important confirmatory evidence of the original use of the beam was obtained, by raising the floor over the ceiling at the end of the building; this exposed to view an oak tie beam, in which the joist of the gallery rested at the time the front timber was lodged in the lower mortices of the gallery posts; thus giving to the gallery an inclination by which a view of the preacher below was obtained. Upon examining the opposite end of the frame, no tie beam was found, confirming our views as to the use of the beam described.

If this beam and posts had been intended

originally to support a ceiling and upper floor, they would have been so framed as to divide the building into equal parts, and would have been placed immediately under the middle rafter, where they could have afforded the greatest support to the roof; but we found them placed at about one-third of the distance from the end. The beam moreover is a third larger than it would have been, had two cross beams been framed to support an upper floor.

The gallery beam, as originally laid, was supported by two knees, formed out from the posts, as was usual in the English Churches, built as early as 1600. This support was necessary to prevent the beam from yielding, when the gallery was filled with people. Upon changing the use of the beam, from the support of the gallery to the support of a ceiling and floor, these knees were no longer required; one of them has disappeared, and a portion of the other remains.

The building is now supported and prevented from spreading, by long iron bolts inserted into the beam and hidden behind the plastering.

A railing has been placed in front of the gallery, and colored brown, to indicate that it is an addition, made by the Committee. This probably represents the position of the old gallery front; the ends of the posts occupy the mortices, which were no doubt in use for the original front.

And now in closing their labors, the Committee present the key of the structure to the Institute, with a sincere wish that this holy house may be preserved to those who come after us, and handed down from generation to generation as a valued trust.

Respectfully submitted,

FRANCIS PEABODY,
GEORGE D. PHIPPEN,
A. C. GOODELL,
IRA J. PATCH,
C. W. UPHAM.

[Continued from 2nd page of Cover.]

NATURALISTS' DIRECTORY. [Issued with Proceedings. Vol. V. 1867.]

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